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Washington Atmosphere

Politics Holding Back Assassination Report

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WASHINGTON.

There is growing uneasiness in Washington over the timing of the Warren Commission report on the assassination of President Kennedy.

Within the commission itself, headed by the forceful Chief Justice, very earnest consideration is being given to finding some way to postpone publication until after the Presidential election.

The feeling of some members of the commission is that, if the final report is as sternly critical of the security agencies of the government as they would like it to be, it may be misused in the campaign and its detachment marred by partisanship.

The membership of the Warren panel is diverse and bipartisan. Besides the Chief Justice, it includes two Senators, two Representatives, a former director of the CIA and another Republican who has served many Presidents. These men have all been in public life many years. They are steeped in the Washington atmosphere, and it is understandable that they should begin wondering, now that their findings are taking shape, how they can avoid entangling their report with the Presidential campaign.

What the commission is overlooking is that the national atmosphere is not a replica of the Washington atmosphere. I believe American public opinion, which responded to the horrible event of Nov. 22 with such calmness, balance and unity, will not misread or misjudge the commission's report even if some politicians tempt the public to do so.

The best way for the Warren Commission to avoid getting its report entangled in the Presidential campaign is to cease trying to keep it out; that is, to complete its exhaustive investigation as promptly as possible and to issue its report as soon as possible.

It is evident, I think, that the country wants and deserves to have the conclusions and judgments of the commission just as soon as they can be made ready. To use any artificial devices to hold up the report in an effort to avoid politics would, in my judgment, enmesh the report in politics.

No American can look back at the circumstances which surrounded and followed the assassination of President Kennedy without feeling that there was laxity in security provisions and that some very important lessons need to be drawn from this experience.

I suspect that those who will be most disappointed in the commission's report will be the Europeans, who still seem intent upon believing that the assassination just had to be "some kind of a plot," a conspiracy in which Lee Harvey Oswald was used and then silenced by Jack Ruby's bullet.

Much of the French and British press still favor the "conspiracy" theory and they will have a hard time accepting the Warren Commission version that there was no plot. Perhaps one reason so many Europeans are wedded to the conspiracy theory is that they can't quite believe in the coincidence of two psychotics—Oswald and Ruby—in one place at the same time,

Apart from the fact of there being no evidence of conspiracy, Americans find it even harder to believe that the Communists would use such an obvious and unreliable agent as Oswald or that extremists on the Right would enlist or trust a pro-Communist agent to do their work.

There is no evidence that Ruby was a tool of anybody but himself. He had no conspiratorial ties with extremists of either end. There could be no assurance that he would ever be in a position to do what he did.

It is clear that the American people will ponder the Warren Commission report calmly and attentively. It should not be held back.